

The Cuneiform Legends of Chaldea,*)

And their Relation to the Early Hebrew Writings.

A PAPER READ BEFORE THE PHILOSOPHICAL CLUB, BROOKLYN, N. Y., FEBRUARY 20, 1879.

BY LEWIS G. JANES.

(Continued.)

As to their age, the principal documents in the Assyrian language, from which translations have been made, discovered in the ruins of Nineveh, must necessarily have been written prior to the destruction of that city, which occurred about 625 B. C. Internal evidence proves them to have been copies of older records, the copies having been made in the eighth and early part of the seventh centuries B. C. It is interesting to remember that this was also the period of the earliest "writing prophets" of Israel. The Genesis legends of the Pentateuch did not, according to Kuenen† and the best judgment of modern liberal scholars, take form until several centuries later.

As to the age of the earlier documents, of which these records are merely copies, Mr. George Smith, the Assyriologist, a very careful and conservative scholar, thus testifies: "The Izdubar Legends, containing the story of the flood, and what I believe to be the history of Nimrod, were probably written in the south of the country, and at least as early as 2000 B. C. These legends were, however, traditions before they were committed to writing, and were common in some form to all the country. The story of the Creation and Fall belongs to the upper or Akkad division of the country, and may not have been committed to writing so early as the Izdubar Legends; but even this is of great antiquity."‡

Prof. J. L. Porter, of Assembly's College, Belfast, an eminent Orthodox scholar, declares that "the Assyrian tablets in their original form are at least two centuries older than Abraham, and six centuries older than Moses; while the remarkable traditions they contain are older still."§ Sir Henry Rawlinson, one of the ablest of Oriental scholars,—"the first to give an accurate translation of the older cuneiform writing,"—vouches for the correctness of Smith's renderings, and ascribes to the legends which the inscriptions record an antiquity of 6000 or 7000 years B. C.¶

A portion of the evidence on which these dates are based is, in brief, the record of early astronomical observations and the testimony of the copies, themselves, that the originals from which they were transferred were of the period of Urukh, king of Ur, who lived somewhere from 2250 to 2000 B. C. It is very improbable that such an admission should have been made unless it were true; as the monarchs of those days were more than willing to claim for themselves all the glory of the achievements of their own times. Moreover, inscriptions of the time of Urukh—bricks and tablets bearing his stamp—have been found, and the language in which they were written is identical with that of these inscriptions. This language had ceased to be spoken at the time when these copies were made, and was probably read only by the scribes and scholars. Various sculptures on seals and tablets of the age of Urukh, and even an earlier period, have also been discovered, which illustrate these legends, and prove them to have existed at this time.

THE LEGEND OF THE CREATION.

Considering, first in order, the Legend of the Creation and its likeness to the account in Genesis, I shall present in the main the translation of Mr. Fox Talbot, modified when necessary for greater fullness and accuracy by a careful comparison with the interlinear rendering of Mr. George Smith. The Chaldean account of the Creation is inscribed on a series of clay tablets, only portions of which have been saved from the ruins. The record is, therefore, incomplete; but its general tenor is unmistakable. A fragment of the first tablet reads:

"When the upper region was not yet called heaven;
And the lower region was not yet called earth,
And not a plant had grown up on the earth below,
And the abyss of Hades had not opened its arms,
Then the watery chaos gave birth to all of them,
And the waters were gathered into one place."

This extract corresponds with Genesis i., 1 and 2: "In the beginning, the gods (Elohim) created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was without form, and empty, and darkness was upon the face of the deep."

The rest of the tablet is much broken.

*) From The Index.

† History of the Religion of Israel. By Dr. Abraham Kuenen, of the University of Leiden.

‡ The Chaldean Account of Genesis. By Geo. Smith.

§ Exploration as verifying Revelation. By Prof. J. L. Porter, in Princeton Review, July, 1878.

¶ Journal of the Asiatic Society and Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia.

‡ The Chaldean Account of Genesis. By Geo. Smith.

ken. The record refers mainly to the action of the gods. A fragment reads:

"... When order did not exist,
Then the great gods appeared also.
The gods Lahmu and Lahamu, they caused
To come also—"

Mr. Smith says of this fragment: "The gods Lahmu and Lahamu are the male and female personifications of motion or production, and correspond to the moving wind or spirit in Genesis."* The co-relative Bible passage reads: "And the spirit of the gods moved upon the face of the waters."

Only a few incomplete fragments of the next three tablets of this series have been discovered. One of them evidently gives an account of the creation of dry land and its separation from the watery chaos.

The fifth tablet commences:

"All that was done by the great gods was delightful."

Anu constructed dwellings for the gods;
He arranged constellations whose figures were like animals.

He made the year. Into four quarters he divided it.

Twelve months he established,

And marked by their constellations, three by three;

And for the days of the year he appointed festivals.

He marked the courses of the planets

That they may not do injury, and may cause no trouble.

He fixed the residences of the gods Belt and Hea with him.

And he opened the great gates in the shrouded darkness.

The fastenings were strong, on the left and on the right.

In the centre he placed luminaries;

He agitated the lower chaos, and made the moon to rise out of it;

He appointed the moon to rule over the night,

And to wander thro' the night until the shining of the day."

The translation of the remainder of this tablet is so uncertain, that I will not attempt to reproduce it. Mr. Fox Talbot, apparently allowing his preconception and desire to influence the result, makes it include the establishment of the seventh day as a holy assembly day, when all should cease from labor; while Mr. George Smith, whom I should judge to be a more careful and reliable authority, translates it simply as describing the quartering of the moon.‡ The fragment concludes with an account of the creation of the sun (the god Shamash) to rule the day.

So far as reliably translated, this account corresponds very nearly with Genesis i., 14-19, the fourth day of the creation: "And the gods said, Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years. And let them be for lights in the firmament of heaven to give light upon the earth; and it was so. And the gods made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; they made the stars also. And the gods set them in the firmament of heaven to give light upon the earth and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness; and the gods saw that it was good."

The principal differences in the two accounts are, that in the Chaldean legend the greater prominence is given to the moon, which is represented as created first; while in the Hebrew record, the sun, "the greater light," has the precedence. In the Chaldean tablet, the account opens with the expression: "All that was made by the great gods was delightful;" which corresponds with the close of the Hebrew version: "And the gods saw that it was good." This correspondence and difference run through the entire account of the creation; each Chaldean tablet opening with this expression, while its equivalent closes the record of each creative day in the Hebrew version.

* The Chaldean account of Genesis. By Geo. Smith.

† The god Bel is identical with Eln, which is the Hebrew El. In this trial of gods, Anu, Eln, and Hea, whose residences were "fixed" together in heaven, as in the Hindu trimurti, Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva, is there not a suggestion of the Christian Trinity? It is noticeable that, in the Genesis account, the plural designation, Elohim, is used.

‡ Journal of the Asiatic Society.

§ The Chaldean Account of Genesis. By Geo. Smith.

(To be Continued.)

"The Crucifixion" in Northern Mythology.

The current number of the *Nineteenth Century* contains an exceedingly interesting article from the pen of Karl Blind, on "The Discovery of Odinic Songs in Shetland." Comparative philologists and students of ancient folk-lore are only beginning to justly estimate the wealth that is hidden in the few old Norse and Germanic myths that have survived the vast social upheavals and changes of the last two thousand years. Karl Blind, in the paper before us, calls attention to a fresh discovery in the poetry of Northern mythology, in the shape of what he terms "a most striking bit of folk-lore, containing a strange relic of the grand old myth" of the Teutonic tree of existence. The discovery was made in Unst, and the relic in question is stated to be "a Christianized version of the Rune Rime of Odin from the Havamal, curious for the way in which the Rootless Tree is confounded with the

Cross." The following is an ordinary English translation of the relic in question:

"Nine days he hung on the Rootless Tree:
For bad was the folk, and good was he.
A bloody mark was in his side—
Made with a lance—that would not hide (heal).
Nine long nights in the nipping rime,
Hung he there with his naked limb.
Some they laughed;
But others wept."

Karl Blind interprets the "nine long nights," as nine maturing months or cosmogonic periods, and that this tale, as it is given in the fuller version of "Odin's Rune Song," is a "poetical rendering of the evolution of mind from matter."

The question uppermost in our mind is whether the above ancient Northern legend has been made to wear a Christian garb, or whether it is not a genuine relic of pre-Christian times? "The mystic tree itself, on which Odin hung, certainly needed no transfiguration" into Christian language, for trees or crosses "were frequent all over the world, from China and Egypt to Mexico and Peru." "Tree of our Life," and "Tree of our Flesh" were the names given to the Mexican cross symbol by the native priests before the arrival of Cortez. The cross or tree of life was a religious symbol thousands of years before the Christian era, and "on Scandinavian runic stones the cross is found depicted, before the conversion of the Northmen." Karl Blind proceeds to show that "at the time of the conversion of the Germanic tribes, the tree in which Odin hung, wounded and suffering, and the several hammer symbols of Thor, easily became confused with the symbol of the new religion." Like the religions of India and Egypt, the ancient Teutonic faith appears to have contained elements, which, to put it mildly, "could be used for transition into the new creed."

Besides the mystic tree, the sign of the cross, and the institution of infant baptism, the Teutons had the tradition of a great flood, even as the Indians, the Greeks, and other nations had. . . . They further had a Queen of the Heavens, Frigg, whose son, Balder, destined to die, was called "the blood covered God." They believed in twelve divine personages, among whom a thirteenth, Loki, played the traitor. They believed that the God who had been slain by treachery would come back at the end of time, when the golden age, or millennium, would follow. They had lays in which that return was prophesied in words remarkably similar to those contained in the Gospels of St. Mark and St. Luke, when the world's end and the coming of the son of man are prophesied. (1099). The modern sciences of modern philology, mythology, and theology, are certainly making havoc with cherished religious beliefs; nor is it possible to say what may yet be the results of these explorations into the legends of the past. We recommend a perusal of Karl Blind's contribution to our scanty knowledge of the Odinic legends. *Jew. World.*

Jottings from the Diamond Fields.

KIMBERLY, 26th May, 1879.—We have been excited here by the visit of Sir Bartle Frere. He paid a visit to the synagogue on Friday evening and remained some little time while the usual service for Sabbath eve was said. He mentioned that the synagogue was one of the prettiest places of worship in South Africa. Even in this remote part of the world, the hirelings of the conversionist societies are found pursuing their trade of trapping Jewish souls. Not even the bed of the sick and the dying is free from their obtrusive and offensive activity. A Jew, named Myers, was accidentally struck on the head whilst playing quoits. He was taken to the hospital, and after lingering a few days, died. But before his death, although the poor fellow was in a state of unconsciousness, Mr. Tobias—with that want of charitable feeling and delicacy for which these miserable conversionists are well known—went to the death bed and actually attempted to convert the dying man. As soon as the Jews heard of this, they endeavored to relieve Myers from this addition to his sufferings. Chiefly through the exertions of Mr. D. Harris, (who personally ascertained from the doctor that Myers was quite irresponsible for his acts, his brain being affected), representations were made to the hospital authorities, and Mr. Tobias was not allowed to visit him any further. The poor fellow lived only a few hours after, and he was buried with all the usual rites in the Jewish burial ground.

Murder of a Jew in Constantinople.

A shocking murder was committed on Friday, the 13th ult., in a tolerably well-to-do Turkish house in the Bagtcheapou quarter of Stamboul. The victim, however, was not a member of the establishment, but an outsider, a Jewish *saraff*, or money-changer, who was enticed into the house by one of the servants. The object of the crime was the sordid one of theft of the man's money. The *saraff* was a young Israelite from Philippopolis, who had come to Constantinople during

ring the war troubles in his native town, and established himself as a small money changer in Stamboul, near Bagtcheapou. The crime seems to have been premeditated, and on Friday morning the victim went to the house, having been sent for, it is understood, with a message that some of the inmates wanted to change money. The first to give the alarm was the lady of the house herself, who, hearing piercing screams in the *kouak*, and not knowing what to make of it, and being unable to obtain an explanation, threw open one of the windows and cried into the street for help. The police were soon on the premises, but it was some time before they unravelled the mystery. After fully half an hour's search, however, they discovered the unhappy *saraff* stuffed into an obscure corner of a small stable, and with his head nearly severed from his body. The murdered man's money was found in possession of one of the grooms of the *kouak*, who was at once apprehended and conveyed to the prison of the Grand Zaptieh in Stamboul, as were also some of the other servants of the house.

THE TALMUD.

At the May Meeting of the Society of Biblical Archaeology, a Paper, entitled "The Talmud in Relation to Biblical Archaeology," was read by the Rev. Josiah Miller, the object of the Paper being to advocate the translation of the Talmud into English, as a work of the utmost service to Biblical Archaeology. In the discussion which followed, the Rev. A. Löwy pointed out the difficulties which the execution of such a work as that proposed by Mr. Miller would present. Mr. Löwy thought that the voluminous size of the Babylonian Talmud, would in itself be an insurmountable difficulty in publishing a complete translation of it. The cost of translating and publishing its 2,497 folio pages, would consume as large an amount of money as might suffice to found a college to teach the Talmud. The Talmud is written in what may be termed "a contracted style." An English paraphrase could not be compressed into six times the number of such pages as are required for the original text. It had also to be remembered that there might be equal claims for translations, or rather paraphrases and explanations, of the Jerusalem Talmud, (which is of about a fourth part in length of the Babylonian Talmud), of the ancient Midrashim, or Expositions of the Pentateuch, and some other portions of the Hebrew Scriptures, and finally of the Talmudical "Additamenta." The extent of such a prodigiously expensive undertaking must show that the scheme is impracticable. Mr. Löwy agreed with Mr. Miller, that the Talmud contains an immense quantity of information bearing on philology, antiquities, national folklore, jurisprudence, the sciences of botany and zoology, medicine and astronomy, etc., etc.; but at the same time it contains so much that is of no interest to the majority of students, that few persons would be found to wade through a translation of this voluminous work, and therefore there would be few to purchase it. Acknowledging Mr. Miller's great merit in having brought this subject under public discussion, Mr. Löwy observed, that in his opinion the following desiderata existed with respect to Talmudical studies: 1. A "Bibliographia Talmudica," giving a complete list of works written on the Talmud; 2. Scholia on the Talmud, such as have been commenced by Dr. Wiesner, in Germany; 3. Systematic monographs on important subjects contained in the Talmud; 4. Prizes to elaborate such works as have just been referred to, and encouragement to the publication of such Talmudical lexica (almost concordances), as have been undertaken by Dr. Kohut, in Hungary.

JEWISH BENEVOLENCE.

M. Edouard Magnus, who died recently at Gothenburg, (Sweden), bequeathed 200,000 rixdhalers to the city for the foundation of a free university. — The late Herr Gottlieb Frank, a member of the Vienna Bourse, left his entire fortune, amounting to 100,000 florins, to Jewish and Christian philanthropic institutions in the Austrian capital. — Another Viennese Jew, Herr Gustav Figdor, bequeathed to the Burgomaster of Vienna a sum of 30,000 florins, in stocks, the interest of which is to be annually applied toward the support of three poor students who have distinguished themselves in science, medicine and the law. The testator stipulates that one student must be a Jew, another a Protestant, and the third a Roman Catholic. Even the above named gifts, splendid as they are, and showing as they do the tolerance of the donors, are put in the shade by an act of beneficence on the part of Herr Poliakov, of St. Petersburg. This gentleman, who is known as "the Russian Railway king," has given no less a sum than 200,000 roubles (about £29,000) to establish a Benevolent Fund for the maintenance of indigent students in St. Petersburg, without regard to their religious professions.

Dr. Kleeberg on the Sabbath Question.

The *Union*, of New Haven, Conn., of July 9th, publishes an account of an interview with Dr. Kleeberg, of that city, wherein that minister expressed his individual convictions that Judaism can give up its Sabbath, worship on Sunday, and still thrive.

"I have preached and drawn deductions that showed, I think satisfactorily, that this Sabbath matter is not so important as some of the faith would make it. Our religion can live whether we hold our Sabbath on Saturday or Sunday. Take a parallel case: Eighteen hundred years ago the Jews fought with might and main against the destruction of the Temple, for they thought when the Temple went, Judaism would go. The Temple was destroyed, but Judaism still lives, and is more triumphant now than ever before. Well, that was a fight for place; now comes a fight for time—the Sabbath. There is a fight now to keep the Jewish Sabbath, and some are raising the cry that if we lose it, we lose Judaism. I think there's not the slightest fear."

"And you think the Jews will in time lose their Sabbath?"

"Undoubtedly. I would rather keep it, but we must submit to it, and with as good grace as possible. Eighteen hundred years ago the Romans overpowered us and took away our Temple; now the state of civilization—the spirit of the age—is against us, and I see our Sabbath slowly slipping away. We cannot prevent it any more than we could the loss of our Temple; and neither will interfere with the progress and growth of Judaism."

"And now, before you depart," said the speaker, "let me go back to the Sabbath question for a moment, and I'll tell you what I think it will come to. It lies in the progressive spirit of the age that the Sabbath will not be limited to one-seventh part of the week as it is now; but instead, a part of each day will be set aside for the worship of God. Why should it not be so? You don't eat enough or sleep enough in one day to last you through the week, and why should you partake of soul-food enough in one day to carry you through seven? No, sir, in the future—the far future—I foresee that man's hours of labor will be reduced, and that while he will work three or four or five hours a day for his body and for mankind, he will also have several hours a day to devote to his soul. You get the rough idea? Well, I believe that, and I feel certain it will come to pass. It's a far better division than the Mosaic division."

ROUMANIA.

Five hundred citizens of Bacau have petitioned the Chamber against the revision of the Constitution, alleging that the granting of equal civil and political rights to the Jews would cause the ruin of Moldavia.

Signor Leon Artom, of Asti, has been promoted to the post of Ordnance Officer to King Humbert.

The daily papers of this city have circulated the following dispatches:

"LONDON, July 16.—A Bucharest dispatch announces that the Ministers tendered their resignation to-day, and that the Chamber of Deputies immediately assembled for consultation relative to the situation. Previous dispatches stated that the Ministers could not secure a majority in favor of the emancipation of the Jews, which the powers urgently demand as a condition of their recognizing the independence of Roumania. It is believed that if the Jews are not emancipated, Austria, Russia, and Turkey, who have already recognized the independence of Roumania by appointing representatives at Bucharest will recall them. It is feared that any further attempt to coerce Roumania might be the commencement of renewed complications in Eastern affairs."

"VIENNA, July 21.—Prince Charles, of Roumania, it is reported, has threatened to abdicate, unless the Jews are emancipated."

ROUMELIA.

The *Pall Mall Gazette*, commenting on the attack committed on Jews in Eastern Roumelia says: "The outrage on the Jews at Karlova leaves little to be desired on the score of brutality. It is very likely that this outrage, having been committed by Bulgarians, will pass without further comment. But Prince Vagorides' regime in Eastern Roumelia is not opening in a promising manner for those of his subjects who are peaceable and law-abiding; and now that the authority of the Porte has been virtually set aside for good and all in the province, there seems to be no refuge to which misery, whether Turkish, Jewish, or even Greek, may escape from Bulgarian licence and wrong."

—The tendency to cling so desperately to dreamland is more frequently an utterance of that refined Epicureanism, which is one of the worst and commonest tendencies of the day.—*Leslie Steven.*